

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

We write in strong support of two grant applications submitted by the Center for Civic Education (the Center) for U.S. Department of Education Supporting Effective Educator Development (SEED) Program funding. These grants, which total \$25.9 million over three years, would provide teacher professional development in the fields of elementary, middle, and high school civics and government across the country.

There is universal agreement that improving student outcomes in civics or any subject takes dedication, commitment, and perseverance. Educating America's youth – the next generation of leaders of our country – on the principles enshrined in our Nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights is critical.

In 2015, the U.S Department of Education awarded the Center a multi-year SEED Program grant to fund a nationwide teacher professional development program in the fields of civics and government to increase student achievement in these subjects. It is our understanding that prior SEED Program grant funding allowed the Center to provide professional development to over 2,000 teachers. Teacher expertise, as research has consistently shown, is one of the most important factors in raising student achievement. Unfortunately, the Center's 2015 SEED Program grant funding is essentially exhausted.

For these reasons, the Center is applying for new SEED Program grants for its Strengthening Democracy in America (SDA): A Professional Development for Secondary School Teachers proposal, as well as its James Madison Constitutional Democracy Project (JMCDP) proposal. If funded, these two programs would build on the success of the Center's previous work that was funded through the 2015 SEED Program grant, allowing for continued evidence-based teacher professional development in civics and government to continue improving student outcomes in these subjects.

Specifically, the SDA proposal is designed to supplement the Center's evidence-based We the People professional development program with additional curricular materials for students and an online professional development program for middle school and high school teachers to promote responsible deliberation and principled responses to current issues in our Nation's representative democracy. The JMCDP proposal would continue to build the newly developed online professional development program, which was created under the Center's current SEED-

funded James Madison Legacy Project, to provide 4th through 8th grade teachers with professional development in civics.

The Center estimates the SDA program will reach 1,500 middle school and high school teachers and increase the achievement of at least 117,900 students nationwide. The JMCDP program would likely reach more than 1,500 elementary school and middle school teachers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, benefitting over 90,000 students, according to the Center. Furthermore, the Center believes these updated proposals reflect an approach validated by numerous research studies and evaluations throughout the years, including a Georgetown University study that found the programs had significant positive outcomes, including greater improvement in middle and high school students' civic knowledge test scores.

We believe the Center's SEED Program applications for the SDA proposal and the JMCDP proposal are consistent with the intent and priorities for nationwide programs laid out in the Federal Register for this grant program. The applications also reflect congressional priorities as outlined in the Explanatory Statement accompanying the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Public Law 113-235), which call for the SEED Program to support nationwide programs pertaining to civics education.

If awarded the SEED grants, the Center's proposed SDA and JMCDP programs would provide critical support for the training of a new corps of highly effective elementary school, middle school, and high school teachers of civics and government. It is of the utmost importance to give students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to become competent and responsible citizens guided by a reasoned commitment to the fundamental values and principles of American democracy. Accordingly, we strongly support both of the Center's SEED grant applications and respectfully ask for your full and fair consideration of these proposals.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/
KEVIN McCARTHY
House Republican Leader

/s/
JOHN LEWIS
Member of Congress

/s/
ROBERT B. ADERHOLT
Member of Congress

/s/
TROY BALDERSON
Member of Congress

/s/
KAREN BASS
Member of Congress

/s/
JOYCE BEATTY
Member of Congress

/s/
JACK BERGMAN
Member of Congress

/s/
EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
Member of Congress

/s/
ROB BISHOP
Member of Congress

/s/
SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.
Member of Congress

/s/
LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
Member of Congress

/s/
SUSAN W. BROOKS
Member of Congress

/s/
JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

/s/
MICHAEL C. BURGESS, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress

/s/
TONY CÁRDENAS
Member of Congress

/s/
ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

/s/
KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

/s/
JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress

/s/
STEVE CHABOT
Member of Congress

/s/
JUDY CHU
Member of Congress

/s/
DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

/s/
YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress

/s/
WM. LACEY CLAY
Member of Congress

/s/
TOM COLE
Member of Congress

/s/
PAUL COOK
Member of Congress

/s/
ERIC A. "RICK" CRAWFORD
Member of Congress

/s/
JASON CROW
Member of Congress

/s/
DANNY K. DAVIS
Member of Congress

/s/
PETER A. DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

/s/
DIANA DeGETTE
Member of Congress

/s/
MARK DeSAULNIER
Member of Congress

/s/
NEAL P. DUNN, M.D.
Member of Congress

/s/
TOM EMMER
Member of Congress

/s/
ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress

/s/
ANNA G. ESHOO
Member of Congress

/s/
ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress

/s/
DWIGHT EVANS
Member of Congress

/s/
BRIAN K. FITZPATRICK
Member of Congress

/s/
CHUCK FLEISCHMANN
Member of Congress

/s/
BILL FLORES
Member of Congress

/s/
MARCIA L. FUDGE
Member of Congress

/s/
RUSS FULCHER
Member of Congress

/s/
MIKE GALLAGHER
Member of Congress

/s/
JOHN GARAMENDI
Member of Congress

/s/
MIKE GARCIA
Member of Congress

/s/
GREG GIANFORTE
Member of Congress

/s/
ROB GIBBS
Member of Congress

/s/
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

/s/
MICHAEL GUEST
Member of Congress

/s/
DEBRA A. HAALAND
Member of Congress

/s/
ALCEE L. HASTINGS
Member of Congress

/s/
JOHANA HAYES
Member of Congress

/s/
DENNY HECK
Member of Congress

/s/
KEVIN HERN
Member of Congress

/s/
FRENCH HILL
Member of Congress

/s/
JAMES A. HIMES
Member of Congress

/s/
ELEANOR NORTON HOLMES
Member of Congress

/s/
STEVEN HORSFORD
Member of Congress

/s/
BILL HUIZENGA
Member of Congress

/s/
HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES
Member of Congress

/s/
DUSTY JOHNSON
Member of Congress

/s/
MARCY KAPTUR
Member of Congress

/s/
JOHN KATKO
Member of Congress

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MIKE KELLY
Member of Congress

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ROBIN L. KELLY
Member of Congress

/s/
TRENT KELLY
Member of Congress

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RO KHANNA
Member of Congress

/s/
DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress

/s/
DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress

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PETER T. KING
Member of Congress

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DAVID KUSTOFF
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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SUSIE LEE
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DEBBIE LESKO
Member of Congress

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ANDY LEVIN
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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BILLY LONG
Member of Congress

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ALAN LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

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CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress

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ROGER MARSHALL, M.D.
Member of Congress

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THOMAS MASSIE
Member of Congress

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BRIAN J. MAST
Member of Congress

/s/
LUCY McBATH
Member of Congress

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MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Member of Congress

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JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress

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JERRY McNERNEY
Member of Congress

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GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress

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GRACE MENG
Member of Congress

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CAROL D. MILLER
Member of Congress

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JOHN R. MOOLENAAR
Member of Congress

/s/
JEROLD NADLER
Member of Congress

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RICHARD E. NEAL
Member of Congress

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JOE NEGUSE
Member of Congress

/s/
DAN NEWHOUSE
Member of Congress

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TOM O'HALLERAN
Member of Congress

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STEVEN M. PALAZZO
Member of Congress

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DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member of Congress

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ED PERMUTTER
Member of Congress

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CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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MARTHA ROBY
Member of Congress

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DAVID ROUZER
Member of Congress

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C.A. DUTCH RUPPERSBERGER
Member of Congress

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BOBBY L. RUSH
Member of Congress

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TIM RYAN
Member of Congress

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JOHN P. SARBANES
Member of Congress

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MARY GAY SCANLON
Member of Congress

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ADAM B. SCHIFF
Member of Congress

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BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress

/s/
KIM SCHRIER, M.D.
Member of Congress

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JOSÉ E. SERRANO
Member of Congress

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BRAD SHERMAN
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MIKIE SHERRILL
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STEVE STIVERS
Member of Congress

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THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Member of Congress

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ERIC SWALWELL
Member of Congress

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BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Member of Congress

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GLENN “GT” THOMPSON
Member of Congress

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MAC THORNBERRY
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DINA TITUS
Member of Congress

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PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress

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MICHAEL R. TURNER
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JEFFERSON VAN DREW
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NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ
Member of Congress

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MICHAEL WALTZ
Member of Congress

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DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ
Member of Congress

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BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member of Congress

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RANDY K. WEBER, SR.
Member of Congress

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BRAD R. WENSTRUP, D.P.M.
Member of Congress

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ROB WOODALL
Member of Congress

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RON WRIGHT
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DEVIN NUNES
Member of Congress

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JIM HAGEDORN
Member of Congress

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DOUG COLLINS
Member of Congress

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STEVE COHEN
Member of Congress